



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

December 7, 2004

Mr. Brad Norton
Assistant City Attorney
City of Austin - Law Department
P.O. Box 1546
Austin, Texas 78767-1546

OR2004-10376

Dear Mr. Norton:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 214287.

The City of Austin (the "city") received a request for all independent fee appraisals for a city urban renewal project. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.105 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that the submitted information is subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code. Section 552.022 provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

(a) Without limiting the amount or kind of information that is public information under this chapter, the following categories of information are public information and not excepted from required disclosure under this chapter unless they are expressly confidential under other law:

(1) a completed report, audit, evaluation, or investigation made of, for, or by a governmental body, except as provided by Section 552.108[.]

Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(1). The submitted information consists of three completed appraisal reports made for the city. Therefore, as prescribed by section 552.022, the city

must release the submitted appraisal reports unless they are confidential under other law or excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. You do not raise section 552.108 in this instance, and instead you argue that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.105. However, this exception is a discretionary exception under the Act and does not constitute "other law" for purposes of section 552.022. See Open Records Decision No. 564 (1990) (governmental body may waive statutory predecessor to section 552.105); see also Open Records Decision No. 522 (1989) (discretionary exceptions in general). Accordingly, the city may not withhold the submitted information under section 552.105 of the Government Code. As you raise no other exceptions to disclosure and the information at issue is not otherwise confidential by law, we conclude the city must release the submitted appraisal reports to the requestor.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "L. Joseph James".

L. Joseph James
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LJJ/seg

Ref: ID# 214287

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Darwin Hamilton
State Office of Risk Management
P.O. Box 13777
Austin, Texas 78701
(w/o enclosures)